

**Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust
Education, Remembrance, and Research (ITF)**

**Plenary Session
Krakow November 15- 16, 2005**

Report

Delegations present

Members

Argentina, Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland (Chair), Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States

Liaisons

Croatia, Estonia, Greece, Slovakia

Observers

Belgium, Finland, Spain, Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany, Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe—Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE-ODIHR)

The plenary meeting was introduced by Professor Yehuda Bauer, ITF Academic Advisor, who made a statement about the genocide of the Roma and Sinti during World War II.

I. Candidates for Membership

Professor Bauer began the session by mentioning the United Nations Resolution on Holocaust Remembrance. He indicated that this declaration might create a new environment for Holocaust education in general and for the ITF in particular. He also stressed the importance of launching a thorough examination of the future of the ITF in this context, particularly with regard to membership, and announced his intention to propose **revised membership criteria before the end of 2005**.

Belgium

Delegations stated the importance of Belgium developing teacher training and cooperating further with neighboring countries. Germany and the Netherlands declared their intention to reinforce their partnerships with Belgium.

Croatia

The United States and Israel expressed their satisfaction about the work already underway in Croatia, in particular in cooperation with the Jasenovac Memorial.

Greece

Professor Bauer underlined the necessity of Greece developing training for teachers that would directly involve the Ministry of Education as well as institutions from other countries.

The Greek delegate announced the creation of an **International Advisory Group on Holocaust Education** for Greece, which would comprise representatives from the French Shoah Memorial, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Yad Vashem, and the United Kingdom Imperial War Museum.

The Italian delegation also expressed the wish to develop programs in partnership with the Greek government.

Slovakia

Germany, the Czech Republic, and Israel expressed their intention to pursue cooperation with Slovakia.

Belgium, Croatia, Greece, and Slovakia were accepted as members of the ITF.

The ITF Chair suggested that new members report at the next plenary in Budapest about new projects implemented in their respective countries.

Furthermore, all new members were asked to be in touch as soon as possible with the ITF Chair and the Working Group chairs to present the names of their appointees to the working groups. These representatives must be specialists in Holocaust education, remembrance, and research.

II. Future Presidencies

The **Hungarian delegation** presented in detail the organisation and objectives of the incoming ITF president. Mr. Balint Magyar, Minister of Education, will serve as ITF Chair. He will be represented by Mr. Zoltan Loboda, Director General of the Department for International Relations of the Ministry of Education.

Mr. Loboda insisted on the cooperation of the Ministries of Education and Foreign Affairs. The government will be supported in this task by a national advisory group comprising representatives of NGOs and Jewish communities.

The proposed dates for ITF Meetings in 2006 are:

March 9: Chairmanship is passed on. To be discussed with the Polish Chair.

May 21–24: First plenary session

Nov 12–24: Second plenary session

The possibility of holding a meeting of the Strategic and Implementation Working Group (SIWG) was also mentioned, although no date was established.

Professor Bauer restated the importance of the SIWG in dealing with matters related to the future of the ITF. He also suggested that an additional SIWG meeting take place on the occasion of the first plenary session during a half-day.

The **Czech Republic delegation** announced its intention to hold the ITF Chairmanship in 2007. The decision will be confirmed officially in May 2006.

III. Working Group Reports (full reports are available separately)

Academic Working Group (AWG)

AWG chair Juliane Wetzel (Germany), presented the following items to the plenary:

The AWG will create **guidelines** to link research projects more precisely to the field of Holocaust education. This issue has been put on the agenda for the next meeting.

The AWG is facing severe **problems in terms of the representation** of national delegations. Several delegations have still not appointed a representative to the AWG, and many of those who were appointed are not Holocaust specialists, thereby diminishing the AWG's expertise and its ability to review project applications. Ms. Wetzel also requested that new ITF members immediately appoint to the AWG a representative with relevant competencies.

The AWG will **initiate an academic conference** on the state of Holocaust-related research, to be held every year with the support of the ITF and organized in cooperation with the ITF Chair. A subcommittee (ISAAC—ITF Subcommittee for the Bi-Annual AWG Conference) was created, chaired by the Netherlands, in order to implement this decision. This subcommittee will work in cooperation with all ITF working groups.

Mr. Feliks Tych offered to host the first conference at the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland. Hungary also expressed an interest in hosting such a conference in 2006.

Reports on the conferences will be made at ITF meetings to inform government representatives about the state of research in, and the need for, Holocaust education.

The AWG will create a list of Web sites useful for researching the Holocaust. A subcommittee comprising AWG and IWG members has been created to do this.

The AWG also discussed the possibility of the ITF dealing with genocides other than the Holocaust. No consensus was reached on this issue. However, it was repeated that the Holocaust, on which the ITF should always focus, is a paradigmatic genocide and therefore is relevant to the prevention of, and education about, other genocides.

Education Working Group (EWG)

EWG Chair Karen Polak (the Netherlands) presented the results of the educators' discussions, which dealt mainly with the internal organization of the working group. The following items were of particular interest to the plenary:

The EWG has drafted a **new Project Proposal Application**, which will require more detailed information from applicants. This document will be presented to the other working groups for approval. In addition, the EWG has compiled guidelines regarding applications for educational projects.

The Academic Advisor mentioned the role of national delegations in increasing the activity of the ITF by encouraging the submission of **more project applications**. To this end, he also encouraged the EWG to deal with issues of content more than with structural and procedural matters and to make it a priority to increase the number and quality of Holocaust education projects.

The EWG chair stated that while national representation within the group is quite good, country **appointees must be Holocaust specialists** able to review project proposal applications and advise applicants on good practices.

The Dutch delegation emphasized the role of governments—particularly with regard to finances—in ensuring that relevant individuals and NGOs are active in the ITF and assume responsibilities within the working groups.

The EWG will meet **in Vilnius from February 13 to 15, 2006**.

Memorials Working Group (MWG)

MWG Chair Heidemarie Uhl (Austria) expressed her satisfaction with the work implemented by the group's members. The main items presented were:

The **Holocaust Memorial Museums Database** created by the Topography of Terror with the support of the ITF is almost complete and will be launched officially on January 27, 2006. The Web site address is: www.memorial-museums.net.

The **conference** "Overlapping Histories—Conflicting Memories: The Holocaust and Cultures of Remembrance in Eastern and Central Europe" will take place in Vienna April 23–25, 2006, at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, under the auspices of the Austrian delegation to the ITF.

Meetings of the ITF working groups will be organized on this occasion as well.

Regarding the relation between the Holocaust and other genocides, the MWG believes that the work of the ITF is very strongly connected to the contemporary world and the ITF cannot only focus on the past. The MWG is ready to **cooperate with institutions dealing with genocides** other than the Holocaust which require ITF support.

Regarding the establishment of a Holocaust Memorial Day by the United Nations, the MWG recommends that the ITF Chair initiate cooperation with the United Nations.

The Academic Advisor expressed concerns regarding the implementation of Holocaust Remembrance Day in some member countries. He emphasized that Holocaust Remembrance Day should focus on the Holocaust and take into account the historical and comparative contexts in which we are working. This is supported by the ITF, the OSCE, the United Nations, and the European Union.

Information Working Group (IWG)

IWG Chair Michelle Gross (United States) presented the new ITF Web site. The address is: www.holocausttaskforce.org. Other items discussed include:

The IWG Chair urged the delegations of France, Hungary, Luxembourg, and Romania to appoint a permanent representative to the group.

The reports on Holocaust education in ITF member countries will be available online before the end of the year. All countries that have not forwarded their final report to the IWG and EWG chairs should do so as soon as possible.

The brochure that the ITF decided to create in Warsaw will finally be compiled by an IWG subcommittee.

NGOs, ministries, and all other institutions involved in the work of the ITF are invited to place a link on their Web site the ITF Web site.

Fund Working Group (FWG)

Ms. Katarina Kristensson (Sweden) presented the results of the discussions that took place within the FWG.

Given the importance of the ITF in financing new projects, the FWG proposed that the ITF undertake the following measures to reinforce communication about project funding:

Guidelines on projects and Project Proposal Applications should be circulated to potential applicants by **national delegations** in their home countries as well as by the ITF chair. Furthermore, links to the ITF Web site should be created by all institutions involved in ITF work. In general, better communication within member countries is needed.

Working Groups should consider the possibility of **financing larger projects** or supporting projects implemented on a term of several years.

The objective of increasing the number of projects funded should be on the **agenda of all working groups** at the next plenary meeting.

The FWG recommends the creation of **national support groups**, such as the one existing in Switzerland or the one being created in the Netherlands, comprising representatives of all NGOs and governmental agencies active in Holocaust-related issues. This could lead to the improved coordination of efforts at national and international levels as well as the widespread dissemination of information about the ITF in all concerned fields.

The FWG asks that all ITF delegations implement or initiate **at least one project per year** under the auspices of the ITF.

The FWG Chair will send a letter to all delegations concerning the feasibility of **managing the Fund in Euro** instead of U.S. dollars. Under this proposal, members would pay in dollars the equivalent of 25,000 euro in 2006 and then would pay 25,000 euro beginning in 2007. No consensus was reached on this proposal.

The FWG has decided to increase the grant given to support the work of the **ITF**. A letter detailing the decision will be sent to all national delegations for final approval.

Special Working Group on Challenges in Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust

Mr. Christer Mattsson (Sweden), in charge of chairing this joint AWG-EWG group, reported on the work done by the leading Swedish team. The project is currently in its technical phase. The scientific staff has circulated a new version of the survey for teachers and is preparing discussions on how to structure this work in pilot countries. The international analysis will be funded by the ITF. Modalities will be presented to the AWG.

IV. Cooperation with Other International Organisations

The Chair announced a visit to the **Council of Europe** in December 2005, in which representatives of France and of Hungary are also expected to participate. A report on the meetings will be circulated over the general listserv.

Ms. Kathrin Meyer, Advisor on Antisemitism Issues at the **OSCE-ODIHR**, an observer at the plenary session, stressed the importance of not duplicating international efforts. She presented the following projects to the ITF, some of which could lead to additional cooperation:

The development of teaching materials on contemporary antisemitism, in cooperation with the Anne Frank House.

The creation in partnership of guidelines on contemporary forms of antisemitism and on how to prepare a Holocaust Remembrance Day, in cooperation with Yad Vashem. These guidelines should be ready on January 27, 2006, and will be available on the ODIHR Web site and CD-Rom and as a booklet.

The creation of databases of academic papers and reports and of practical initiatives taken by NGOs on non-discrimination programs.

National meetings gathering NGOs and government authorities under the auspices of the OSCE to discuss possible improvements in Holocaust education. A first tentative meeting is scheduled in Poland, but the priority will be OSCE countries who are not members of the ITF.

The EWG Chair suggested that the guidelines for **preparing a Holocaust Remembrance Day** be published jointly with the ITF and, eventually, with the United Nations.

The United Kingdom proposed that the OSCE and ITF **reach out together to new countries whenever possible** to promote Holocaust education. The OSCE is invited to participate in the work of the Ukraine working group, chaired by the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. Joint initiatives could also be undertaken with Russian NGOs.

The national delegations decided that cooperation with the United Nations should soon be undertaken. However, the type of cooperation is open to further discussion. The ITF Chair will take the first step and send a **letter to the United Nations Secretary-General** informing him of the availability of the ITF (Annex 1).

In parallel, national delegations will informally approach UN officials and advise the ITF Chair of their findings.

VI. Academic Advisor

Professor Dina Porat introduced herself to the plenary. It was then said that:

Professor Porat will assume the position of ITF Academic Advisor on January 1, 2007.

Until January 1, 2008, Professor Bauer will remain informally involved in the work of the Advisor. Professor Porat's appointment is for three years. The SIWG will evaluate her work after a two-year period.

The decision of the plenary in Warsaw to evaluate her after one year is therefore invalidated.

The ITF delegations appointed Professor Yehuda Bauer ITF **Honorary Chairman** as of January 1, 2007.

The national delegations agreed on the content of a job description for the Academic Advisor (Annex 2). This document is informal and will be used only internally.

Additional discussions took place about possible changes to the ITF **structure**.

The United States delegate asked that the issue of intensifying the institutionalization of the ITF be put on the agenda of the next SIWG meeting. He added that given comments about the lack of transparency in the SIWG, this issue should also be added to the agenda.

The German delegate stated that no structural changes are needed for the time being. He stressed that the efficiency of the ITF lies in part in its flexibility and lack of bureaucracy.

VII. The Holocaust, Other Genocides, and Threats of Genocide: The ITF Role

The plenary decided that the ITF Chair should send a letter to Mr. Juan Mendez, United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, expressing **concerns about the situation in Darfur**, Sudan (Annex 3).

This letter will be posted on the ITF Web site and the Chair will issue a press statement with regard to it.

The Academic Advisor restated that the role of the ITF is to focus on the Holocaust. He stressed that **genocide is the context** in which the Holocaust took place and that therefore there is educational value in treating it as a paradigmatic genocide from which other genocides are better understood. Teaching about the Holocaust should lead to empathy with the victims of other genocides.

The EWG Chair, Ms. Karen Polak (the Netherlands), added that teachers should be provided with **tools to compare** and reflect on genocide. It was decided that this issue should be put on the agenda of the next EWG meeting.

The national delegations agreed to establish contacts and to share experiences with organisations working on other genocides.

VIII. Progress Report on the International Tracing Service of Bad Arolsen

Mr. Johannes Houwink ten Cate (the Netherlands), chair of the ISAI AH subcommittee following up on this issue, reported on the discussions currently underway within the International Commission of the International Tracing Service. Following the advice of the ITF, a subcommittee of experts was created by the Commission to reach a consensus on the opening of the archives. Results are expected to be presented to the Commission on the occasion of its first meeting under the presidency of Luxembourg in January 2006.

The French and United States delegations restated that the aim of the discussions is the opening of the archives to researchers, as recommended by the ITF. They also prompted the delegates of all ITF countries, as well as members of the International Commission, to actively contribute a consensus as soon as possible.

It was decided that the ITF would not intervene directly in the discussions before the conclusions of the International Commission are presented.

IX . Outstanding Issues

The ITF **Chair encouraged Finland**, present as an observer, to apply for ITF membership and declared the It's its readiness to cooperate with Finish authorities on that matter as soon as possible.

Spain, present as an observer, announced its intention to present an **official candidacy for membership in 2006**, but will wait until membership criteria and application procedures are fully clarified.

Latvia announced the organization of an international academic **conference in Riga**. The conference will likely take place on July 4, 2006.

Annex 1

Letter to United Nations Secretary General Mr. Kofi Annan

Excellency,

In my capacity as Chair of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research, I wish to inform you that the Task Force member countries have acknowledged the adoption by the United Nations of a resolution on Holocaust Remembrance. We very much welcome the decision of the United Nations to designate an International Day of Commemoration of the Victims of the Holocaust as well as the decision to support the implementation of Holocaust education programs.

The twenty four national delegations of the Task Force, composed of governments and NGO's representatives, have therefore officially decided in plenary session in Krakow, Poland, on November 16, 2005, to offer all assistance possible to the United Nations within the framework of the "Holocaust and the United Nations" outreach program.

I hereby wish to assure you of the complete support that the Task Force Chair and national delegations stand ready to provide to the United Nations in order to foster Holocaust education, remembrance and research wherever needed. The genocide of the Jews during the Second World War is an unprecedented and paradigmatic case of genocide which carries a universal message. Teaching about this tragedy, and also about the other crimes perpetrated by the Nazi regime and its collaborators, should therefore remain a priority in terms of prevention of racism, antisemitism and xenophobia.

I sincerely hope that a close cooperation between the Holocaust Task Force and the United Nations will be implemented in order to fulfill this noble and important mission.

With best regards, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

Prof. Daria Nalecz
Holocaust Task Force Chair

Annex 2

The Academic Adviser (AA) to the International Task Force (ITF) Tasks and Responsibilities

Version 5 – Plenary November 16, 2005 - APPROVED

The AA's position has evolved together with the ITF, and hard and fast definitions of his or her duties should be avoided as far as possible.

On the other hand the need has emerged to lay down, in very general terms, what the AA's tasks and responsibilities are.

1. The AA's responsibility is to contribute to the work of the ITF in accordance with the Stockholm Declaration which is the fundamental and governing charter of the ITF.
2. The AA, the prime expert consultant to the Chair, supports and advises the Chair of the ITF to the best of his/her abilities in all substantive matters that the ITF engages in, primarily, but not exclusively in those that pertain to the whole work being done by the Working and Liaison Groups.
3. As the consensus rule applies to the work of ITF, the AA should seek ways to help the Chair as well as the Chairpersons of the Working and Liaison Groups in finding productive compromises between different views, in the spirit of the aims pursued by the ITF.
4. The AA participates at all meetings of the plenary and SIWG of the ITF.
5. The AA will be available for consultation, first and foremost whenever the Chair asks her/him to do so, secondly also by any national delegates, by members of the different Working and Liaison Groups, and by facilitators of projects approved by the ITF.
6. The AA is expected to review all funding applications (PPA's). He/she has no need to comment on them but may intervene with expressing his opinion, suggestions and proposals for amendments.
7. The appointment or termination of the appointment of the AA requires a consensus of the member countries' government representatives. The appointment will last for three years with a review after two years conducted by the Chair. Should he/she resign before completion of the term, he/she should notify this early in advance so that the plenary could take the appropriate decisions. The AA may be reappointed at the end of three years subject to the consensus of the member countries' government representatives.
8. The AA acts *pro bono*, and therefore receives no remuneration whatsoever. Only her/his travel, hotel and actual expenses are covered, normally by the Chair country.

Annex 3

Letter of the Task Force Chair to United Nations' Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide Mr. Juan Mendez

Excellency,

In my capacity as current Chair of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, I wish to convey to you my deepest concerns regarding the current crisis in the Darfur region of Sudan.

As you know, the Task Force is committed to the 2000 Stockholm Declaration on the Holocaust, which states that:

“With Humanity still scarred by genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, antisemitism and xenophobia, the international community shares a solemn responsibility to fight those evils.”

Our role is to ensure that the lessons of the Holocaust, which was recently commemorated at the United Nations, are remembered and passed on to new generations. In this spirit of imparting an educational message in the post-Holocaust world, I strongly believe that it is my duty to share with you my concerns over the tragic consequences for civilian populations of the prolonged conflict in Sudan, in particular in the region of Darfur, and the resulting increase in the number of victims, refugees and internally displaced persons.

The international community certainly must increase its efforts to halt the on-going atrocities in Darfur, to systematically condemn abuses of humanitarian and human rights law in Sudan and to help bring to justice those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity, “especially those with an ethnic dimension”, as stated in UN Resolution 1556.

With best regards, I remain,

Sincerely Yours,

Prof. Daria Nalecz
Holocaust Task Force Chair